



IN THE FIELD



For some people, taking over the family business means inheriting a company; for Zac Hiedeman, it meant becoming a civil engineer for the Forest Service. Hiedeman, who currently serves as the facilities and bridges engineer for the Deschutes National Forest, has worked for the agency for six and a half years, getting his start as a seasonal survey technician on the Custer Gallatin National Forest, in Montana. Originally from Bozeman, Montana, he grew up as the son of a Forest Service roads manager and civil engineering technician.

After obtaining his Bachelor of Science degree in civil engineering from Montana State University, Hiedeman took his first permanent position with the Forest Service as an engineer on the Bitterroot National Forest. By participating in the U.S.D.A. Pathways program, a career placement opportunity available to recent college graduates, Hiedeman was able to secure a full-time permanent position directly following the completion of his degree.



"Engineering is a great way to get into the Forest Service," recommends Hiedeman. "You can begin as a permanent employee, which isn't usually an option in a lot of fields."

Hiedeman spent more than four years on the Bitterroot National Forest, before accepting his current position on the Deschutes National Forest a year and a half ago. Since coming to the Deschutes, his biggest task has been serving as the project manager for the Cascade Lakes Welcome Center. As the project manager, he acts as the on-the-ground representative for the Forest contracting officer.

Being an engineer, Hiedeman has the working technical knowledge of the project, and can provide support and oversight to the contracted construction crew as needed. Substantial completion of the Welcome Station, which will provide information to visitors along the popular highway route into the Deschutes National Forest, is expected sometime in December.

Some of Hiedeman's other projects include: working on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) update on Skyliners Lodge, designing and constructing the Meissner Snow Shelter update, and planning the Green Ridge Lookout catwalk and railing restoration project.

"As engineers, we mostly help with regulation compliance," says Hiedeman. "It's a lot of the stuff people don't ever really see or think about, but it's stuff that we're the only ones qualified to do."



Although he doesn't always have a typical day, a standard day for Hiedeman lately begins by coming into the office in the morning to check emails and catch up on any new details for his projects. From there he heads to his current project site to inspect the work being done. During his time on-site, he answers any questions that the construction crew might have while also ensuring that they're staying on schedule. He usually heads back to the office for the last few hours of the day to work on smaller design projects.

"Being an engineer is a great job for people who really love math," advises Hiedeman, who is adamant that people follow career paths that are fulfilling. "Whatever you do, make sure you're passionate about it."